Visit of US Commerce Secretary

846. SHRI SUSHILKUMAR SAMBHAJIRAO SHINDE:

SHRI GAYA SINGH:

PROF. VIJAY KUMAR MALHOTRA:

SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA:

SHRI S. S. AHLUWALIA:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the US Commerce Secretary visited New Delhi and other parts of the country in January this year just following the visit of the US Defence Secretary and his team.

(b) if so, what specific agreements and protocols were signed with the US Commerce delegation; and

(c) the present balance of trade with the US and how far it is likely to improve with the implementation of the new agreements during the ensuing years?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) India and the USA signed an MOU on the formation of the Indo-US Commercial Alliance. Chief Executive Officers of 25 large American Companies accompanied the US Commerce Secretary in this visit and signed or announced a number of MOUs/agreements etc., in different sectors including power, Telecommunications, Petro Chemicals etc., involving Private Sector investments.

(c) India has a positive balance of trade with the USA. The balance of trade during 1993-94 was Rs. 4038 crores, in favour of India. During the current year 1994-95 balance of trade for the period April-December, 1994 is estimated at Rs. 4883 crores in favour of India.

Import of Sugar by MMTC

847. SHRIMATI KAMLA SINHA:

DR. BAPU KALDATE:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that MMT had recently imported sugar from t international market even before t tenders were officially opened;

(b) if so, what is the quantity of t sugar imported stating (i) the price which sugar has been imported; (ii) t total cost involved (in foregn exchang and

(c) the reasons for going in for ir ports before the opening of the tende officially?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF TH MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI CHIDAMBARAM): (a) to (c) MMT has intimated that it has not import sugar from the international market b fore the official opening of the tende Pursuant to Government's directive purchase sugar on forward contraictir MMTC has so far contracted a quanti of about 1.81 lakh tonnes of sugar an average C&F price of about U $ 434.75 per MT.

Excess production of tea

848. SHRI T. VENKATRAM REDDY

SHRI G. PRATHAPA REDDY

Will the Minister of COMMERCE pleased to state:

(a) whether there has been excess pr duction of tea in the country during ea of the last three years;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether excess production has le to slump in the domestic market pri of tea.

(d) if so, whether the Assam T Companies are contemplating stoppa of tea production to sustain price lev and

(e) if so, the steps being taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) and (b) Production of tea during the past three years has been as follows:

Year	Production (in Mn. Kms.)
1992 . . .	704
1993 . . .	758
1994 . . .	744 (Prov.)

(c) As a result of higher production of tea coupled with lower intake of Indian tea by Russia, Iran and CIS countries, prices of teas at major auction centres have shown a decline.

(d) No, Sir. There were unconfirmed reports of North Indian Tea industry deciding to halt production in North East India from December, 1994 till next season. This has however since been repudiated by the industry.

(e) Does not arise.

Export of aluminium metal

849. SHRI T. VENKATRAM REDDY:
SHRI G. PRATHAPA REDDY:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state whether the export of indigenous aluminium metal has increased during the current year in comparison to last year?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): The value of exports of Aluminium metal and semis during April-November, 1994 was Rs. 175.00 crores (Provisional). The exports during 1993-94 and 1992-93 were Rs. 255.00 crores and 383.00 crores respectively.

Imposition of Import Duties on Indian Tobacco by US Administration

850. SHRI T. VENKATRAM REDDY:
SHRI G. PRATHAPA REDDY:
Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that US Authorities have imposed import duties on Indian tobacoo:

(b) if so, the details of the trade relations with US on the issue of Indian Tobacoo; and

(c) steps being taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) to (c) While US has not yet effected any changes in the tariff structure on Tobacoo, a minimum domestic content requirement of 75 per cent. was prescribed in US legislation governing cigarette production in USA, in 1993. Upon the matter being raised by interested parties (India had a third party interest), a GATT panel has ruled this measures not to be in conformity with US obligations under GATT.

Trade agreement with South Africa

851. SHRI SUSHILKUMAR SAMBHAJIRAO SHINDE:
SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether during the recent visit of South African President to New Delhi, a trade agreement between the two countries was signed:

(b) if so, the terms of agreement: and

(c) the likely impact thereof on the export/import trade during ensuing years?